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ABSTRACT

Researchers interested in social power in organizational contexts have focused on investigating whether situational factors affect people's preferences for types of influence tactics. The persuade package is defined as a small standard set of methods (influence tactics) that leads to a particular goal (persuade the target to do something). The hypothesis that the preference order for types of influence tactics is invariant across situations (Schank & Abelson, 1977; Rule, Bisanz, & Kohn, 1985) was examined in the context of downward influence by systematically varying (1) the type of job described, (2) the role identities of the actors, and (3) the goal of the actor attempting to influence the target. Also, a taxonomy of influence tactics other than the one generated by Rule et al. (1985) was used. Subjects, 154 undergraduate students, were given a questionnaire in mass testing sessions. Confirmatory factor analysis (LISREL VII) was utilized to examine whether different situations had an impact on the choice among four influence tactics (rationality, ingratiation, assertiveness, and exchange). As predicted, the likelihood and relative degree to which the four tactics would be used were similar across scenarios regardless of the specific features of the situation, providing further supportive evidence for the schema-based notion of a "persuade package." (BF)

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The Persuade Package Hypothesis:

Further Evidence for an Influence Tactics Schema

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Abstract

The hypothesis that the preference order for types of influence tactics is invariant across situations (Schank & Abelson, 1977; Rule, Bisanz, & Kohn, 1985) was examined in the context of downward influence by systematically varying (a) the type of job described, (b) the role identities of the actors, and (c) the goal of the actor attempting to influence the target. Also, a taxonomy of influence tactics other than the one generated by Rule et al. (1985) was used. Confirmatory factor analysis (LISREL VII) was utilized to examine whether different situations had an impact on the choice among four influence tactics (rationality, ingratiation, assertiveness, and exchange). As predicted, the likelihood and relative degree to which the four tactics would be used were similar across scenarios regardless of the specific features of the situation, providing further supportive evidence for the schema-based notion of a "persuade package."

The Persuade Package Hypothesis:

Further Evidence for an Influence Tactics Schema

Researchers interested in social power in organizational contexts have focused on investigating whether situational factors affect people's preferences for types of influence tactics (e.g., Ansari & Kapoor, 1987; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988; Tjosvold, Johnson, & Johnson, 1984).

Those who propose that the preference order for influence tactics is invariant across situations adopt a cognitive framework based on an information processing approach. Rule, Bisanz, and Kohn (1985) explain this invariance using Schank and Abelson's (1977) general schema-based concept of the persuade package. The persuade package is defined as a small standard set of methods (influence tactics) that leads to a particular goal (persuade the target to do something). The persuade package, as other schemata, can be conceptualized as a "package of knowledge" (McClelland, Rumelhart, & Hinton, 1986) or packages of data that form "natural units", and are retrieved from memory as a unity, in a all-or-none manner (Anderson, 1980).

The goal of the present study was to further examine the hypothesis about the existence of a schema-based persuade package, extending previous research in five ways. First, it investigated preferences for influence tactics when they are directed downward (i.e., from supervisor to supervisee). Second, the type of job described (i.e., blue-collar, white-collar), and role identities of the actors (i.e., occupation, level of education) were varied across three distinct situations. Third, subjects were presented with the following tactics: (a) rationality (the influencing agent uses logical arguments and factual evidence to persuade the target), (b) ingratiation (the influencing agent seeks to make the target feel good in a persuasion attempt), (c) assertiveness (the influencing agent sends threats and demands to gain compliance from the

target), and (d) exchange (the influencing agent offers an exchange of favors if the target complies). These four tactics were chosen so as to conceptually replicate Rule et al's results and because they have been theoretically derived and are included in virtually all downward influence taxonomies (e.g., Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Schriescheim & Hinkin, 1990; Yukl & Tracey, 1992).

Method

Subjects

A total of 154 undergraduate students participated in the study for partial fulfillment of their course requirements. Of the total sample, 74 were male and 80 were female.

Procedures

Subjects were given a questionnaire in mass testing sessions. The first page included the instructions, and examples of each of the four influence tactics adapted from Schriescheim and Hinkin (1990). Subjects were asked to read three scenarios (the order of presentation was randomized) and rate the degree to which they believed the source would use each of the four tactics.

Vignettes. In each of the three scenarios, a setting was described in which a supervisor (influencing agent) wanted a subordinate (target of the influence attempt) to perform a task. The three settings differed in terms of (a) the type of job described (i.e., a public relations department, a manufacturing plant, and a landscaping company), (b) the role identities of the actors (i.e., different occupations and levels of education), and (c) the goal of the influencing agent (i.e., write a report, paint a number of objects, mow the lawn). The dependent variables were the subjects' ratings of the likelihood that each of the four influence tactics would be used by the superior to influence his subordinate's behavior.

Results

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for the likely use of each of the four influence tactics in each of the three scenarios.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

A model suggesting that the preference order for influence tactics was consistent across scenarios is presented in Figure 1. This model attempts to account for the covariance matrix among the 12 measures by postulating four underlying factors or latent variables, each of them

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INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

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corresponding to one type of influence tactic. The fit of the model was evaluated with LISREL VII (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1989) using the sample correlation matrix as input and a maximum likelihood solution. The goodness-of-fit indices suggest a relatively good model fit (CFI = .73, GFI = .852 and RMSR = .085). Figure 1 also presents the parameter estimates for the structural coefficients, the estimated correlations among the latent variables, and the standardized coefficients (on each path). All of the paths from the latent to the observed measures were statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Figure 2 shows a model in which it is hypothesized that the preference order for the influence tactics is dependent upon the context in which the tactics are presented. This model attempts to account for the covariance matrix among the 12 observed variables by postulating

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INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

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three underlying factors or latent variables, one corresponding to each job situation. The goodness-of-fit indices were CFI = .27, GFI = .703, and RMSR = .180. As it is shown in Figure 2, because this hypothesized structural model showed a very poor fit, the theta delta matrix was not positive definite, deriving in proportion of variance not accounted for larger than 1.00 for three of the 12 observed variables (I-PR, I-M, and I-L).

As suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we formally tested the hypothesis that the incremental goodness of fit of model 1 over model 2 is statistically significant. The chi square difference was χ^2 (3, $\underline{N}$=154) = 231.92, $\underline{p}$< .001, indicating that the model in Figure 1 has a statistically significant incremental goodness of fit over the model in Figure 2.

Discussion

The results indicated that subjects' preference order for the four types of influence tactics is invariant across the three job situations, providing further supportive evidence for the persuade package (Bisanz & Rule, 1989; Schank & Abelson, 1977; Rule, Bisanz, & Kohn, 1985). It seems that the decision made by subjects about which tactic to choose was guided by a general schema associated with influence situations. As shown in Table 1, the rank-order of the likelihood that each of the tactics would be used was identical across the three situations. Subjects predicted that rational appeals would be most likely, ingratiation somewhat less likely, assertiveness even less likely, and exchange least likely. The order of preference of tactics reported by Rule et al. (1985) and by Bisanz and Rule (1989) is very similar to the order

preferred by participants in the present study. Additionally, the rank-order of the likelihoods that the four tactics would be used was identical to that reported by Yukl and Falbe (1990, Table 7) for the use of influence tactics with a subordinate (downward direction) in still a different situation.

These findings provide further evidence for the existence of a persuade package. Thus, they extend the application of schemata from organizational areas such as performance appraisal (Borman, 1987; Feldman, 1981), and leadership perceptions (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984), to the tactics chosen by individuals when faced with an influence situation.

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Table 1

Mean scores for the likelihood that each of the four tactics will be used in the three situations.

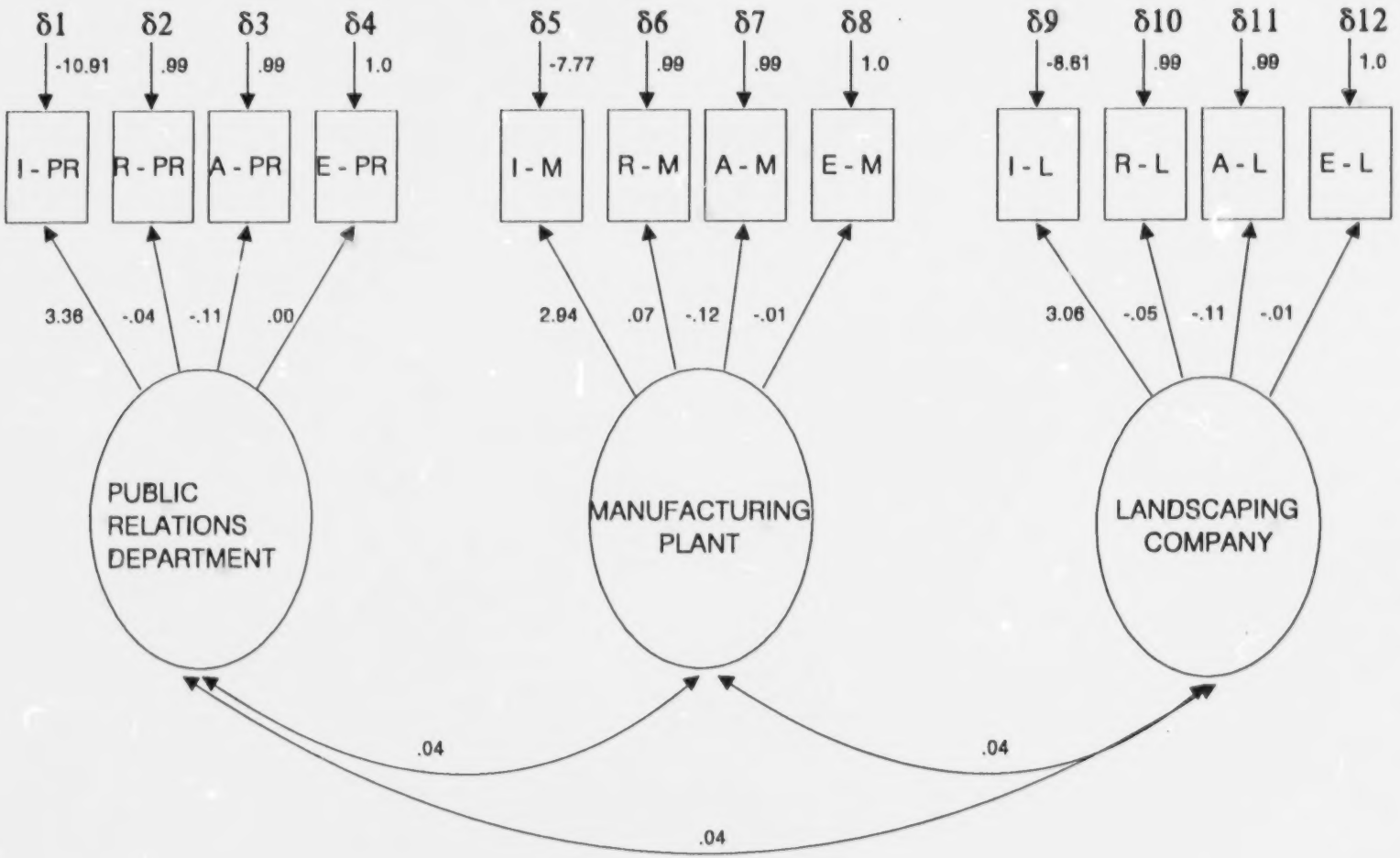
	Public Relations Department		Manufacturing Plant		Landscaping Company	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Rationality	2.56	1.33	2.85	1.36	2.88	1.75
Ingratiation	3.59	1.77	3.58	1.64	3.68	1.88
Assertiveness	4.34	1.96	4.36	1.85	4.51	2.02
Exchange	4.83	1.83	4.69	1.80	5.13	1.86

Note. N = 154. 1 = very likely, 7 = very unlikely.

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Model indicating that the preference for influence tactics is consistent across situations. (** T > 6.00. * T > 2.0 is judged significant at the p <. 05 level, Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1989). (I = ingratiation; R = rationality; A = assertiveness; E = exchange; L = landscaping company; PR = public relations department; and M = manufacturing plant).

Figure 2. Model indicating that the preference for the influence tactics is dependent upon the situation in which they are used. (None of the paths was statistically significant. T < 1.00 for all paths between latent and observed variables and for the correlations among the latent variables; T > 2.00 is judged significant at the p < .05 level, Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1989). (I = ingratiation; R = rationality; A = assertiveness; E = exchange; L = landscaping company; PR = public relations department; and M = manufacturing plant).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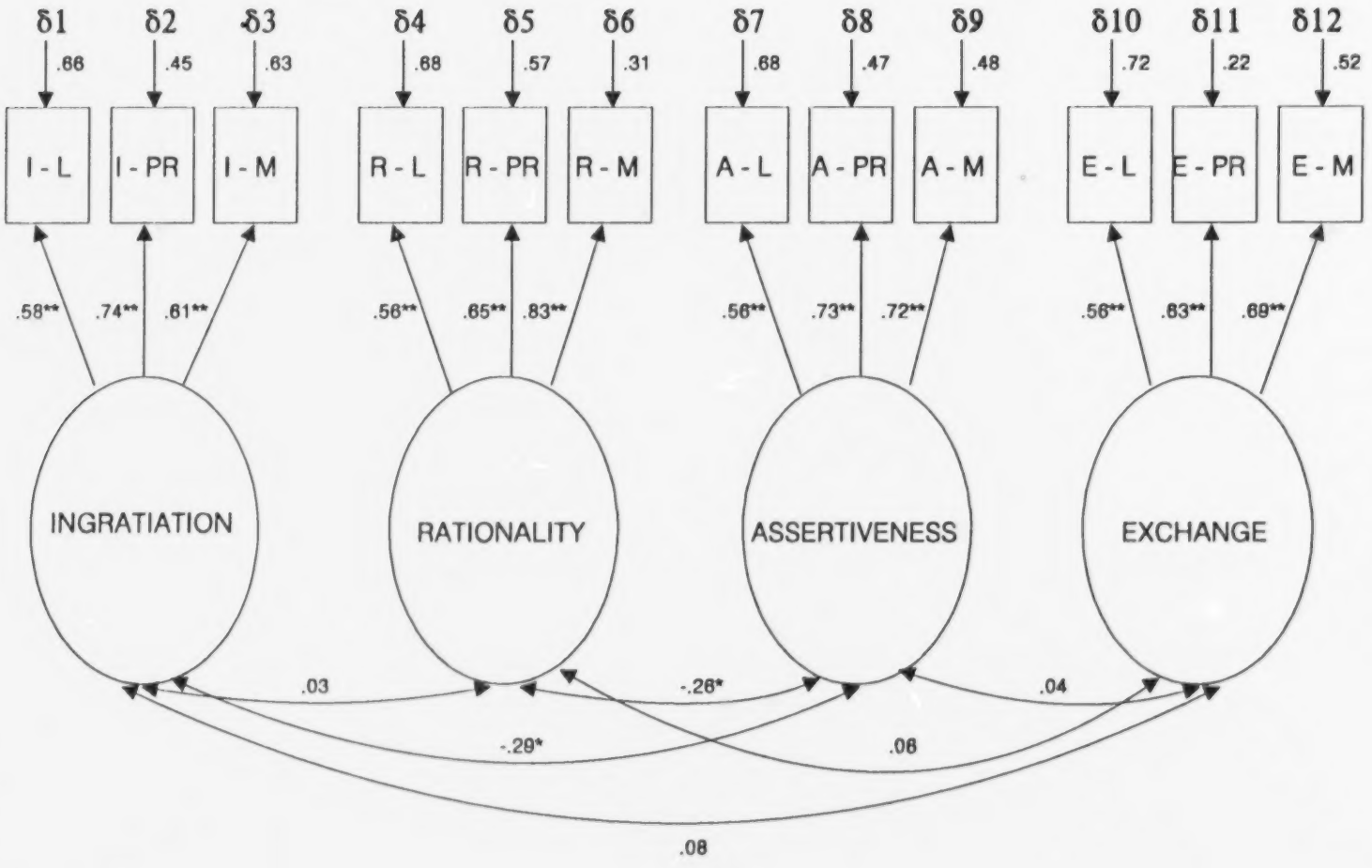
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